

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: SNAR TH
SUBJECT: FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW ARTICLE ON NARCOTICS

1. MAR 17 FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW INCLUDES ARTICLE BY
RICHARD NATIONS TITLED, "POLITICS OF THE HEROIN TRADE."
IN THE ARTICLE NATIONS NOTES THAT THE POPPY HARVEST IN THE
GOLDEN TRIANGLE IS BEGINNING, AND PROCEEDS TO ESTIMATE OPIUM
PRODUCTION BY COUNTRY AS FOLLOWS: BURMA - 250 METRIC TONS;
THAILAND - BELOW 50 TONS; LAOS - UP 500 TO 1,000 TONS; AND
CHINA - 300 TONS. THE PRC ESTIMATE, ACCORDING TO NATIONS,
IS DERIVED FROM U.S. SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHY.

2. NATIONS NOTES THAT MOST NARCOTICS EMANATING FROM THE
GOLDEN TRIANGLE WILL PASS THROUGH THAILAND AFTER
BEING PROCESSED AT REFINERIES ON THE BURMA SIDE OF THE
THAI-BURMA BORDER. HE MENTIONS THE POSSIBILITY OF A
NEW TRAFFICKING ROUTE FROM BURMA THROUGH INDIA, THE
POSSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT SALES BY THE
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LAO, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
BECOMING INVOLVED IN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING.

3. NATIONS ANALYZES THE RTG'S NARCOTICS CONTROL EFFORTS,
RECOGNIZING THE IMPACT THE SEIZURES BY THAI AUTHORITIES HAVE
HAD ON LARGE-SCALE TRAFFICKERS. HE EXPLORES THE PROBLEM OF CHANG
CHI-FU, THE SUA AND OTHER DISSIDENT GROUPS, EXPLAINING THAT

THESE GROUPS, IN DEFERENCE TO THE RTG, NOW LOCATE THEIR REFINERIES JUST ACROSS THE BORDER IN BURMA. NATIONS STATES THAT THE THAI ARE RELUCTANT TO ANTAGONIZE THESE GROUPS FOR FEAR OF DRIVING THEM INTO AN ALLIANCE WITH THE BURMESE COMMUNIST PARTY. HE REVIEWS THE CHANG CHI-FU PRESS CONFERENCE OF FEBRUARY 15 AND THE KRIANGSAK PROMISE OF FEBRUARY 17 TO REMOVE CHANG FROM THAILAND, NOTING THE RTG'S EMBARRASSMENT CONCERNING CHANG'S PRESENCE AND THAT THE RTG HAS NOT YET MOVED AGAINST CHANG.

4. NATIONS CONCLUDES THAT THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM CAN BE SOLVED ONLY BY JOINT ACTION BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF THAILAND, BURMA, LAOS AND THE PRC. HE CONCLUDES THAT SUCH ACTION WILL NOT BE TAKEN IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

COMMENT: NATIONS' ARTICLE IS OF VERY UNEVEN QUALITY, MIXING FACT WITH FICTION. HIS ESTIMATE OF A 500 TO 1,000 TON INCREASE IN LAOS AND THE 300 TON ESTIMATE FOR THE PRC HAVE NO BASIS IN FACT AS FAR AS WE KNOW. THE ESTIMATE OF BURMESE PRODUCTION OF 250 TONS IS FAR TOO LOW, ACCORDING TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION. NATIONS CLAIMS THAT HIS ESTIMATE FOR THE PRC IS BASED UPON SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHY. WE DO NOT WHERE HE LEARNED THIS, BUT OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THAT SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHY IS NOT YET SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN OPIUM FIELDS AND OTHER CULTIVATED AREAS. NATIONS IS RELATIVELY ACCURATE WHEN ANALYZING THE SITUATION IN THAILAND. HIS BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE PROBLEM VIS-A-VIS CANG CHI-FU AND THE OTHER BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS IS PARTICULARLY GOOD.

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WHITEHOUSE

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